

accomplished when people come together. The new, state-of-the-art wing is truly impressive.

I was honored to see it firsthand when I attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony and applauded the many people who poured their hearts into the project. The nearly 50,000 additional square feet; four cutting-edge operating suites; and patient rooms with maximum comfort and connectivity are remarkable, to say the least.

The heart and soul of healthcare in Nebraska is a hospital like the Phelps Memorial Health Center, providing high-quality and compassionate care close to home. Today I celebrate their success in turning an aging institution into a state-of-the-art facility and highlight it as a shining example of what can be accomplished with determination and commitment.●

TRIBUTE TO COAST GUARD HEROES

● Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, it is with great sadness that I mourn the loss of one of our brave Coast Guard airmen who gave his life in the line of duty when a Coast Guard MH-65C helicopter crashed during a training flight in the vicinity of Mobile Bay, AL, on Tuesday evening with four crewmembers aboard. Three other crewmembers remain missing, and the Coast Guard is continuing to search for them in cooperation with State and local authorities from Alabama and Florida.

The cause of the incident is still under investigation, but it serves as a tragic reminder of the heroic sacrifices that the men and women of the U.S. Coast Guard make on a regular basis to protect the people of this country from terrorist threats, natural disasters, environmental hazards, and criminal activity. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families of the airmen onboard the Coast Guard helo that went down Tuesday night, and I would like to take this opportunity to honor their service, and the exploits of many Coastguardsmen before them, who demonstrated extreme valor in the face of danger and epitomized the virtues of bravery and sacrifice in service of their country.

Scores of grateful Americans will gather this evening at the National World War II Museum in New Orleans to honor 14 extraordinary Coast Guard heroes, and their family members will be in attendance to commemorate their legacy. Tomorrow morning, Bollinger Shipyards in Lockport, LA, will dedicate its fleet of fast response cutters and deliver the very first in class to the U.S. Coast Guard, the Bernard C. Webber. This will be the first class of ships in the history of the U.S. military that bears the names of enlisted personnel, as opposed to U.S. Presidents and flag officers. I would like to take a few minutes to share some of their stories.

PO Bernie Webber led a crew of four volunteers from Chatham Station in

Massachusetts in February 1952 to respond to the tanker Pendleton, which was in distress. They braved 60-foot seas, hurricane-force winds, and blizzard conditions on a cold and rainy night off the coast of New England. Wind and waves smashed their windshield and compass along the way, but they managed to save the lives of 33 men in what many historians consider the most difficult small boat rescue in Coast Guard history. To this day, cadets at the Coast Guard Academy in New London, CT, have never been able to fit so many men into a boat the size that Webber commanded.

William Ray Flores was 19 years old and less than 1 year out of boot camp when he gave his life to save his fellow shipmates. On January 28, 1980, the 180-foot Coast Guard buoy tender Blackthorn collided with a 605-foot oil tanker near the entrance to Tampa Bay. The Coast Guard vessel quickly began to capsize after impact, and crewmembers leapt from the deck to escape the sinking ship. Flores, however, decided to strap himself to the lifejacket locker door so he could float lifejackets up to the surface as the ship went down. Twenty-two of Flores's shipmates tragically perished that day, but 27 others survived thanks to his heroic sacrifice. SA Billy Flores was posthumously awarded the Coast Guard Medal for his actions that day, the service's highest award for heroism during peacetime.

Margaret Norvell served for 41 years in the U.S. Lighthouse Service, beginning her career watching over the southern entrance to the Mississippi River at the Head of Passes and later taking over as keeper of the Port Pontchartrain Light and West End Light on Lake Pontchartrain in New Orleans. In 1903, a storm destroyed every building in her small Louisiana community of Buras except Norvell's lighthouse. She immediately responded by taking in the entire community and providing shelter and comfort to more than 200 of her fellow citizens who had been rendered homeless. Later in her career in the year 1926, Norvell received a report that a naval airplane had crashed into Lake Pontchartrain. She immediately set out in her small rowboat and battled a merciless squall for 2 hours before she finally arrived at the scene of the crash, rescued the downed aviator, and brought him safely back to shore.

Stewards-Mate First Class Charles Walter David was a cook aboard the Coast Guard cutter Comanche when the Army transport ship Dorchester was attacked by a German U-Boat off the coast of Greenland on the night of February 3, 1942. David dove into the frigid seas of the North Atlantic and helped to save the lives of 93 soldiers and many of his own crew including the ship's executive officer, who had accidentally fallen overboard. David did not return to his ship until every last soul had been rescued from the water. He contracted pneumonia several days later and died as a result of

his efforts that night, for which he was posthumously awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal for bravery.

Others, such as Isaac Mayo and Joseph Napier, returned to shore multiple times to reembark on new boats after previous attempts caused them to capsize and several of their fellow crewmen to perish in the punishing waves. Both men eventually completed their rescue missions successfully.

These are just a handful of the 58 Coast Guardians who will serve as namesakes for the service's newest class of patrol boats, and their extraordinary acts of valor will continue to inspire future generations of heroes for centuries to come. We salute these brave Americans who risked and gave their lives to save others. We commend the Coast Guard for honoring their memory through the dedication of the fast response cutter fleet, and we thank the dedicated Cajun shipbuilders of Bollinger Shipyards in south Louisiana for providing the Coast Guard with the fastest, most durable patrol boats available to carry out its military, law enforcement, and maritime safety missions.

Our Nation will continue to pray for the airmen onboard the Coast Guard helicopter that went down in Mobile Bay earlier this week, as well as their loved ones. We owe them all a debt of extreme gratitude for their service to this country.●

TRIBUTE TO MELVA E. RADCLIFFE

● Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, today I wish to congratulate Melva E. Radcliffe on her 111th birthday this past Saturday, March 3. A lifelong native of New Jersey, Mrs. Radcliffe is the oldest recorded resident of my State. Her father, the late Wilmer A. Cadmus, served as mayor of my hometown of Paterson. Mrs. Radcliffe attended the Paterson Normal School, now William Paterson University, and taught art and music to elementary school students in Paterson until 1968. Her family tells us she has proudly voted in every election since 1921, and greatly enjoyed traveling after she retired. I wish Mrs. Radcliffe all the best, and congratulate her on this amazing milestone in her life.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Pate, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)